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Message Text

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70
ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-07 INR-07 LAB-04

NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 L-03 NSC-05 PA-01

PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 PC-01 /075 W
---------- 129568
R 082227Z APR 76
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2754

C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 4099

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB, PINT, VE
SUBJ: AD LOSES ANOTHER UNION ELECTION

SUMMARY. AD WAS BADLY BEATEN BY A MEP-MIR COALITION IN ELECTIONS IN THE CARACAS TELEPHONE WORKERS LOCAL, A UNION WHERE AD HAD TRADITIONALLY BEEN STRONG. THE WIN BY THE LEFT HAS AD LABOR LEADERS AND PARTY STRATEGISTS SERIOUSLY CONCERNED ABOUT A POSSIBLE EROSION OF PARTY STRENGTH AMONG ITS TRADITIONAL TRADE UNIONIST SUPPORTERS. END SUMMARY.

1. ON APRIL 4 AD WAS BADLY BEATEN IN ELECTIONS IN THE IMPORTANT CARACAS-STATE OF MIRANDA LOCAL OF THE TELEPHONE WORKERS FEDERATION (FETRATEL). A MEP- MIR COALITION SWEPT TO VICTORY SECURING FOUR SEATS IN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL. AD WON THREE SEATS, AND MAS AND COPEI EACH OBTAINED ONE SEAT. IN TOTAL, OPPOSITION ELEMENTS POLLED NEARLY TWICE THE VOTES WON BY THE AD SLATE - A SUBSTANTIAL TURNAROUND FROM THE LAST ELECTION WHEN AD WON OVER HALF OF THE VOTE.

2. THE MEP-MIR COALITION BASED ITS WINNING CAMPAIGN ON THE PROPOSITION THAT AD, AS THE GOVERNING PARTY WHICH ALSO CONTROLS MANAGEMENT OF THE STATE OWNED TELEPHONE COMPANY, DOES NOT PROPERLY REPRESENT THE WORKERS INTEREST AND IN FACT WAS GUILTY OF SACRIFICING THE WORKERS TO LARGER PARTY GOALS. THE MEP-MIR COALITION, WHICH COMBINES TWO AD BREAKAWAY GROUPS, IS INTERESTING, ALTHOUGH
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COALITIONS IN TRADE UNION ELECTIONS HERE ARE FREQUENTLY

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OPPORTUNISTIC AND HAVE LITTLE IDEOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

3. THE LABOR BUREAU OF AD IS REPORTED TO BE PARTICULARLY UPSET BY THIS LOSS AND IS ACCUSING FETRATEL PRESIDENT LUIS OJEDA OF A LACK OF ATTENTION TO DETAIL AND LACKADAISICAL ATTITUDE TOWARD THE ELECTION. THE LOSS BECOMES DOUBLY GALLING TO AD, CONSIDERING THE LARGE NUMBER OF NEW WORKERS IN THE RAPIDLY EXPANDING TELEPHONE COMPANY, MOST OF WHOM WERE HIRED ON THE BASIS OF A RECOMMENDATION BY THEIR NEIGHBORHOOD AD PARTY LEADER UNDER THE SYSTEM OF UNION REFERRALS USED FOR NEW HIRES. OBVIOUSLY MANY WORKERS WHO WERE GIVEN JOBS AS LOYAL ADECOS TURNED ON THE PARTY AT THE BALLOT BOX.

4. COMMENT: THIS LOSS, WHILE CONFINED TO A LOCAL UNION ELECTION, IS ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE PROBLEMS OF A GOVERNING PARTY IN MAINTAINING ITS POLITICAL BASE AMONG TRADE UNIONISTS IN AN ECONOMY INCREASINGLY DOMINATED BY STATE ENTERPRISES. EARLIER AD ELECTION LOSSES IN THE IRON MINES OF CIUDAD GUAYANA (75 CARACAS 11087) AND THE PETROLEUM WORKERS FEDERATION (CARACAS 1549) WERE CASES OF AD FAILING TO GAIN CONTROL OF UNIONS WHERE IT HAD TRADITIONALLY BEEN IN A MINORITY OR AT LEAST HAD EXPERIENCED SERIOUS PROBLEMS. THE CARACAS TELEPHONE WORKERS, ON THE OTHER HAND, WERE SOLIDLY AD IN THE 1974 UNION ELECTIONS AND BELONG TO A FEDERATION WHICH HAS TRADITIONALLY HAD STRONG AD LEADERSHIP. OJEDA HIMSELF HAS BEEN CONSIDERED ONE OF THE LEADING LIGHTS AMONG YOUNGER AD LABOR LEADERS.
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TAGS: ELAB, PINT, VE, AD, MEP-MIR
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Type: TE
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